United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Co-Chairmen of International Conference invite parties in former Yugoslavia to meet in Geneva next Monday to explore ways to break political deadlock in Bosnian conflict; possible territorial concessions to be discussed along with issue of sanctions against Federal Republic.

+ General Assembly begins debate on composition of Security Council; among other points, speakers call for rotated regional seats and for abolition of veto power.

+ United Nations appeals for $9.5 million in emergency humanitarian assistance for Burundi to cover basic survival needs of 250,000 people displaced by ethnic violence following recent attempted coup.

+ Special Rapporteur on Human Rights says United Nations should continue to observe human rights situation in Haiti; democratic process requires international aid and culture of respect for rights.

+ WFP says $100 million will be needed next year to provide food aid to refugees and people displaced by civil war in Afghanistan.

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The Co-Chairmen of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, Thorvald Stoltenberg and Lord Owen, have invited the parties to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia to a meeting in Geneva next Monday with a view to resolving the crisis in the territory, Alvaro de Soto, the Secretary-General's Senior Political Adviser, said today. The meeting had been suggested by European Foreign Ministers meeting in Luxembourg yesterday. The aim is to build on the agreement reached last week on humanitarian access in Bosnia and Herzegovina and to explore ways to break the political deadlock in the former Yugoslavia. Mr. de Soto said the possibility of territorial concessions in favour of the Bosnian Muslims would be discussed in the context of a possible gradual relaxation of sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).

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The response to the Co-Chairmen's invitations had been positive, Mr. de Soto went on to say. Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic, Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic had already accepted. The Co-Chairmen had also invited United States Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Russian Federation Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev to send observers to the meeting.

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The General Assembly this morning began its debate on the question of equitable representation on and an increase in the membership of the Security Council. The item was first included in the agenda of the 34th session of the Assembly in 1979. Consideration was deferred from year to year until last year, when, at its 46th session, the Assembly decided to include it on the agenda of the 47th session. The Assembly asked the Secretary-General to invite Member States to submit no later than 30 June of this year written comments on a possible review of the membership of the Council and for him to submit these to this session for consideration. He received 75 replies from Members States.

Some speakers today called for establishment of permanent regional seats, to be rotated among members of various regional groups. The representatives of Syria and the United Arab Emirates stressed in particular the importance of having an Arab seat on the Council. A number of speakers described the veto power as anachronistic and undemocratic, and said it should be abolished. The representative of Chile said the category of permanent members without the veto could include Germany and Japan, while the representative of Germany said his country was prepared to accept a permanent seat. In contrast with many other speakers, the representative of Malaysia said his country opposed the addition of new permanent seats on the Council.

A United Nations spokesperson said that the General Assembly President hoped to establish an open-ended working group on the restructuring of the Council following the conclusion of the Assembly's debate on the item. At that time he would introduce a consensus draft decision by which the Assembly would set up the working group. Meanwhile, the President was today continuing consultations with Members on the proposal.

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The United Nations today launched an appeal for $9.5 million in emergency humanitarian assistance for Burundi, according to a United Nations spokesman. The Emergency Relief Coordinator and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Jan Eliasson, said that the money was urgently needed to meet the basic survival needs of 250,000 people in Burundi who had fled their homes because of the recent ethnic violence in the country. The appeal covers a 90-day period to February 1994.

The violence in Burundi, which erupted after an attempted military coup on 21 October, has forced close to a million people to leave their homes. Apart from those displaced within the country, almost 700,000 have fled across

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its borders into Rwanda, Tanzania and Zaire. According to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the continuing volatility of the situation means that still more people might flee in search of safety.

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The United Nations should continue to observe and remain apprised of the human rights situation in Haiti, and the joint United Nations/Organization of American States (OAS) Civilian Mission should remain there for as long as is necessary, according to the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, Marco Tulio Bruni Celli (Venezuela). He made those recommendations in a report on the situation of human rights in Haiti, which was transmitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly today. The Special Rapporteur also recommended that the various groups in Haitian society should be required to honour the commitments they assumed when they signed the Governors Island Agreement and the New York Pact.

The report said that a programme for the promotion of human rights, aimed specifically at the military and police authorities and members of human rights organizations, should be set up with the participation of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights and the Special Rapporteur. The report concluded that the political, economic and social situation in Haiti should continue to be monitored, and said that the democratic process there required international aid and cooperation and the establishment of a culture of respect for human rights.

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More than $100 million will be needed in 1994 to provide humanitarian food aid to refugees and displaced people uprooted by the prolonged civil war in Afghanistan, according to the World Food Programme (WFP). The WFP -- the United Nations organization responsible for channelling all multilateral food aid to Afghanistan -- says more than 4 million refugees and some 1 million internally displaced people need food assistance. Moreover, damage to infrastructure and agricultural production has left the country with an expected wheat deficit of more than 1 million tons in 1993 and 1994.

WFP's governing body last month approved three projects to provide almost 34,000 tons of food commodities to Afghan refugees next year. This includes assistance to 2 million refugees in Pakistan and Iran and to nearly 500,000 internally displaced people in Afghanistan. Despite the signing of the Afghan peace accords in Islamabad last March and the Jalalabad Accords in May, conflict between rival Mujahideen parties continues to devastate villages, towns and cities, inflicting a heavy toll on the civilian population. Since food shortages are expected to be critical in urban areas for some time, part of WFP's relief assistance in Afghanistan will be directed to the urban poor.

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